

# Setting Up a Blog - 1

*by Vanessa Kier*

These days it seems like everyone has a blog. But what, exactly, is a blog? Think of it as a fluid version of a traditional website. By fluid, I mean that the expectation with a blog is that you'll post regular—weekly, even daily—updates. Visitors can then comment on what you've posted and their responses will be viewable by the other visitors to your site. This is different from a traditional website where comments are e-mailed to only you and your site content might only be updated a few times a year.

If you've decided to jump on the blog bandwagon, but aren't sure you have the technical chops, don't worry. Setting up a blog is simple.

There are three phases to setting up a blog. Preparation. Setup. Customization.

## Preparation

1. *Domain name.* Do you have/want a domain name such as [www.author.com](http://www.author.com)? You don't need a domain name to set up a blog. However, if you don't have a domain name, then your blog's web address will include the name of your webhost: [authorname.webhost.com](http://authorname.webhost.com). I have several domain names and when I set up my test blog I linked one of these to the blog. So my url is `domain name\blog`.
2. *Design.* To save time during the customization phase, I suggest you take a look at blogs before you set yours up to see what designs appeal to you. Check out the color scheme, layout, and the different links and action buttons. See if there's an indication which blog software was used to create the site. Blogger/Blogspot sites will have the Blogger logo in the upper left corner. If the blog was created under WordPress, you'll see WordPress and a template name at the bottom of the screen. If you create a WordPress account, you can then use the same design template. If you already have a logo, tag line and/or a color scheme associated with your name, that's great. You'll be able to customize your blog accordingly as long as you have image files you can upload. You might need to alter the size of the file in order to meet the blogging host's requirements.
3. *Provider.* To create a blog you need a blog host. This is the server where the information you put on your blog will be stored. You also need blogging software in order to design the blog and post/update your content. WordPress.com and Blogger/Blogspot (merged now under Google so that both [blogger.com](http://blogger.com) and [blogspot.com](http://blogspot.com) will redirect you to the Blogger page) are two popular providers that offer both free blog hosting and free setup. I tried both of these for setting up my test blog. If you already have a website, check your web host's option list. They very likely offer you the ability to set up a blog from within their hosting environment. My hosting company, StartLogic, offers a slightly pared down version of WordPress.

## Setup

1. *Create a Blog Account.* Both WordPress and Blogger require you to set up an account with a username and password. However, since Blogger is owned by Google, you can set up a blog using an existing Google account, such as a Gmail account. Note: Before you're allowed to create your account you a message box might pop up saying that you need to set your browser to allow cookies. Along with the message there should be a link to an explanation on how to do this.
2. *Follow the Wizard.* Once you've set up your account, both hosts walk you through a short setup wizard. Steps here include naming the blog and giving it a tag line.

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That's it. You have a blog! Now, on to the customization.

### Customization

1. *Time Zone.* Since blog posts are listed by date and time, adjust the time accordingly. In WordPress the time is under Settings/General, in Blogger it's under Settings/Formatting.
2. *URL.* If you didn't set the url to map to a domain name, you can do it on the Settings/Domain page in WordPress and Settings/Publishing in Blogger. Both offer instructions on how to accomplish this.
3. *Privacy.* Do you want your blog to be available through search engines? Only reachable by people typing in your url? Restricted to people you invite to view it? Set the privacy level to what you're comfortable with. You'll find this under Settings/Privacy in WordPress and Settings/Permissions in Blogger.
4. *Design.* Here's where you can lose time if you haven't done your prep work. Both WordPress and Blogger have themes or templates that you can choose for your blog's design—everything from colors and page layout to all the little extra options that make a blog interactive (see below under widgets and gadgets). Browsing through the templates can be fun, but it's also time consuming if you don't know what you want.
5. *Photos, Audio, and Video.* When you create a new post in both WordPress and Blogger there are icons that allow you to upload various media. In WordPress, you can view and manage all your uploaded media in the Media window. For Blogger, any media you upload will be available to you when you next post through the *Add - From this blog* option. If you want to edit or delete the photos, you'll need to log in to Picasa using the same Google account you used to create your blog. That's where your photos have been stored.
6. *Comments.* You can turn off the ability for people to post comments, either for just a specific post or for the whole blog. Why would you turn off comments for the entire blog? Some people use blogging software to create a quick static website. They don't plan on making regular updates and turn off comments to give the site the feel of a traditional website instead of a blog. To turn off comments in WordPress go to Settings/Discussion. In Blogger it's under Settings/Comments.
7. *Widgets and Gadgets—Oh My!* While the title bar and content box are your blog's foundation, widgets (WordPress) and gadgets (Blogger) are the accessories. You can have as many or as few accessories as you want. Some examples of widgets and gadgets are:
  - Search box (allows visitors to search your blog)
  - Labels/Categories (shows a list of all posts by topic)
  - Archives (organizes your posts by month)

To access available widgets in WordPress look under Appearance. In Blogger, go to Design, then click the Add Gadget link on the layout screen.

There you have it. The basics on setting up a blog. Good luck and have fun!

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